

# Stress

## What causes stress<sup>1</sup>?

Stress can arise for a variety of reasons. Stress can be brought on by a traumatic accident, death or emergency situation. Stress can also be a side effect of a serious illness or disease. There is also stress associated with daily life, the workplace and family responsibilities.

## How stress can affect your health<sup>2</sup>:

Stress weakens the immune system, which is your body's defense against infection and diseases (including cancer) and has been linked to each of the following:

- **Heart disease**
- **Atherosclerosis**
- **Hypertension**
- **Autoimmune disorders**
- **Allergies**
- **Diabetes**
- **Colitis**
- **Chronic fatigue syndrome**
- **Depression**
- **Memory problems**
- **Irritable bowel syndrome**

## Early Signs of Stress<sup>2</sup>

- **Headache**
- **Sleep disorders**
- **Difficulty concentrating**
- **Short-temper**



- **Upset stomach**
- **Job dissatisfaction**
- **Low morale**
- **Depression**
- **Anxiety**

## Prevention<sup>2</sup>

Follow these simple guidelines to keep your stress level manageable and to reduce your risk of developing stress-related illnesses and injuries.

### Eat a healthy diet

A healthy daily diet should consist of five or more servings of fruits and vegetables, whole grains more often than refined grains like white rice and white flour, and low-fat foods.

### Exercise

Research has shown that 30 minutes of brisk walking five to seven days of the week can lower a woman's risk for heart attack and stroke. If you're already walking, try adding yoga, tai chi or some other form of relaxing physical activity to your weekly schedule.

### Make time for yourself

Try to eliminate a few of the demands on your time. Maybe you don't have to do all the grocery shopping, or serve on more than one committee. Once you find a few minutes to yourself - listen to music, read a book, take a bath - relax!

Sources: 1. National Office on Women's Health  
Website: [www.4woman.gov](http://www.4woman.gov)

2. Harvard Women's Health Watch: Reducing the Burden of Stress  
Website: [www.health.harvard.edu/article.cfm?id=136](http://www.health.harvard.edu/article.cfm?id=136)

Updated February 2003 by OWH

This information is provided as a source of education and information and is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment.  
The OWH recommends consultation with your doctor or health care professional.